



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Tim Kelly Begins Phased Reopening of City Community Centers Starting Thursday

CHATTANOOGA (Nov. 16, 2021)— Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly on Tuesday ordered a phased reopening of the City's community centers starting on Nov. 18, as part of a plan that in initial stages will include the Avondale, Brainerd, Carver, Hixson, John A. Patten, Shepherd, South Chattanooga, and Westside community centers.

The phased reopening plan, implemented in light of improving pandemic conditions, will provide a safe space for youth and families heading into the winter, and once again make mentorship and programming available in the city's neighborhoods. As centers are reopened, they will also serve as an access point for COVID-19 vaccination clinics made available by the city's Office of Community Health. Community Center hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"Community centers play a critical role in uplifting our city's youth by offering them healthy activities and access to mentors in a safe and educational environment," said Mayor Kelly. "I would encourage everybody to help keep these centers open by getting vaccinated to protect yourselves and our city's most vulnerable residents."

The city's Department of Community Development will phase in programming and other opportunities over the coming months, eventually allowing community centers to be booked for events and restoring all programming over time, in line with sustained gains in pandemic conditions.

The city will follow CDC guidelines for social distancing and enhanced cleaning in all buildings, and officials will continue to monitor pandemic conditions to ensure the first phase of re-openings is conducted safely and that future phases may proceed.

Earlier this year, the mayor ordered all City community centers closed amid surging cases of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. In the months since, vaccinations have increased, and Hamilton County has seen a sharp decline in viral infections as measured by new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Currently, 51 percent of Hamilton County residents are fully vaccinated. The Healthy Chattanooga Coalition—which includes major local employers, including the City of Chattanooga—has set a goal of achieving a minimum 60 percent vaccination rate for workers by December 1, 2021.

“As we near the winter months and the holidays, vaccines are the miracle that allow us to gather in ways that simply were not safe last year, or earlier this year as the Delta variant surged,” said Dr. Mary Lambert, Chattanooga’s director of community health. “We’re fortunate to have ready access to such an incredible safeguard against hospitalization, disability, and death. We will diligently monitor infection and vaccination rates as we reopen these critical community resources, and we encourage all Chattanooga residents to get vaccinated as soon as possible, especially now that many younger residents are eligible.”

Community centers not covered by this initial phased reopening announcement will be included in subsequent reopening phases, with details to be announced at a later date.

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